

REMARKS

This application has been carefully reviewed in light of the final Office Action dated October 31, 2005. Claims 1 to 7 and 10 to 18 are pending in the application. Claims 1, 5 and 10 to 14 have been amended, and Claims 1 and 10 to 14 are in independent form. Reconsideration and further examination are respectfully requested.

In the Office Action, Claims 1 to 7 and 10 to 18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 6,269,343 (Pallakoff) in view of ProQuest I.D. No. 49228274 (Harney). Reconsideration and withdrawal are respectfully requested.

The present invention generally concerns the purchase of a product by a group, in which a request for a group purchase indicating a product to be purchased is received. A terminal is notified of an ID uniquely corresponding to a group of the group purchase. A plurality of purchase states is stored, wherein each of the plurality of purchase states corresponds to an ID uniquely corresponding to a group of the group purchase. A corresponding purchase state in the stored plurality of purchase states is updated, when a purchase of the product indicated in the group purchase is performed. A special favor is given to the purchasers of the group on the basis of each of the stored plurality of purchase states stored and a condition of the group purchase. After a passage of a time period included in the condition, the special favor is given to the purchasers of the group if the corresponding purchase state satisfies the condition of the group purchase, and the special favor is not give to the purchasers of the group if the corresponding purchase state does not satisfy the condition of the group purchase.

Thus, among its many features, the present invention provides for (i) notifying a terminal of an ID uniquely corresponding to a group of a group purchase, the

group purchase indicating a product to be purchased, (ii) storing a plurality of purchase states, each of which corresponds to the ID of the group, and (iii) updating a corresponding purchase state in the plurality of purchase states, when a purchase of the product indicated in the group purchase is performed.

Referring specifically to the claims, independent Claim 1 as amended is directed to a purchase group management server connectable with at least one terminal through a network. The server includes receiving means for receiving, from the terminal operated by a purchaser, a request for a group purchase indicating a product to be purchased, and notifying means for notifying the terminal of an ID uniquely corresponding to a group of the group purchase. The server also includes storage means for storing a plurality of purchase states, wherein each of the plurality of purchase states corresponds to the ID of the group, and update means for updating, when a purchase of the product indicated in the group purchase is performed using the ID by another purchaser of the group, a corresponding purchase state in the plurality of purchase states stored in the storage means. In addition, the server includes control means for giving a special favor to the purchasers of the group on the basis of each of the plurality of purchase states stored in the storage means and a condition of the group purchase. After a passage of a time period included in the condition, the control means gives the special favor to the purchasers of the group if the corresponding purchase state stored in the storage means satisfies the condition of the group purchase, and does not give the special favor to the purchasers of the group if the corresponding purchase state does not satisfy the condition of the group purchase.

Independent Claim 10 as amended is directed to a terminal connected through a network with a purchase group management server. The network includes

receiving means for receiving a request for a group purchase from the terminal operated by a purchaser, notifying means for notifying the terminal of an ID uniquely corresponding to a group of the group purchase, and storage means for storing a plurality of purchase states, wherein each of the plurality of purchase states corresponds to the ID of the group. The network also includes update means for updating, when a purchase of the product indicated in the group purchase is performed using the ID by another purchaser of the group, a corresponding purchase state in the plurality of purchase states stored in the storage means, and control means for giving a special favor to the purchasers of the group on the basis of each of the plurality of purchase states stored in the storage means and a condition of the group purchase. The terminal is used for, in a case where a group purchase is requested to the purchase group management server, notifying the purchase group management server of the request for the group purchase including purchase conditions including at least the name and the number of products to be purchased. After a passage of a time period included in the condition, the control means gives the special favor to the purchasers group if the corresponding purchase state stored in the storage means satisfies the condition of the group purchase, and does not give the special favor to the purchasers of the group if the corresponding purchase state does not satisfy the condition of the group purchase.

Independent Claim 11 as amended is directed to a group purchase method. The method includes the steps of receiving a request for the group purchase from a terminal having an ID, in a case where a request for the group purchase indicating a product to be purchased is made, notifying the terminal having the ID uniquely corresponding to a group of the group purchase, in a case where the request for the group purchase is received, and storing a plurality of purchase states, wherein each of the plurality purchase states

corresponds to the ID of the group. The method also includes the steps of updating, when a purchase of the product indicated in the group purchase is performed using the ID by another purchaser of the group, a corresponding purchase state in the plurality of purchase states stored in the step of storing, and giving a special favor to the purchasers of the group on the basis of each of the plurality of purchase states stored in the step of storing and a condition of the group purchase. After a passage of a time period included in the condition, the special favor is given to the purchasers of the group in the step of giving if the corresponding purchase state stored in the step of storing satisfies the condition of the group purchase, and the special favor is not given to the purchasers of the group if the corresponding purchase state does not satisfy the condition of the group purchase.

Independent Claims 12 to 14 as amended are respectively directed to a program, a recording medium and a selling system which are seen to generally correspond to Claim 11.

The applied art is not seen to disclose or to suggest the features of the invention of the subject application. In particular, Pallakoff and Harney are not seen to disclose or suggest at least the features of (i) notifying a terminal of an ID uniquely corresponding to a group of a group purchase, the group purchase indicating a product to be purchased, (ii) storing a plurality of purchase states, each of which corresponds to the ID of the group, and (iii) updating a corresponding purchase state in the plurality of purchase states, when a purchase of the product indicated in the group purchase is performed.

As understood by Applicants, Pallakoff discloses a method and system that allows sellers to communicate conditional offers to potential buyers. The conditions include prices that depend on the aggregate amount of goods or services that buyers

collectively agree to purchase by a given time and date. See Pallakoff, Abstract; column 1, lines 53 to 67. Elements may be presented on a web page to buyers, with one element being the aggregate amount. See Pallakoff, column 3, line 37 to column 4 line 12; and Figure 2.

The Office Action, at page 3, contends that the URL that displays a single group offer is uniquely associated with the offer and is associated with the terminal requesting the "Join Buying Team" button 28 as depicted in Figure 2.

Without conceding the correctness of this contention, Applicants respectfully submit that Pallakoff is still not seen to disclose or suggest that a terminal is notified of an ID uniquely corresponding to a group of a group purchase, the group purchase indicating a product to be purchased. In addition, Pallakoff is not seen to disclose or suggest that a plurality of purchase states, each of which corresponds to the ID of the group, stored. Moreover, Pallakoff is not seen to disclose or suggest a corresponding purchase state in the plurality of purchase states is updated, when a purchase of the product indicated in the group purchase is performed.

In addition, Harney has been reviewed and is not seen to compensate for the deficiencies of Pallakoff.


Accordingly, based on the foregoing amendments and remarks, independent Claims 1 and 10 to 14 as amended are believed to be allowable over the applied references.

The other claims in the application are each dependent from the independent claims and are believed to be allowable over the applied references for at least the same reasons. Because each dependent claim is deemed to define an additional aspect of the invention, however, the individual consideration of each on its own merits is respectfully requested.

No other matters being raised, it is believed that the entire application is fully in condition for allowance, and such action is courteously solicited.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Costa MESA, California office at (714) 540-8700. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below-listed address.

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